



# TEXAS RECYCLES DAY

*Environmental Tips That Help You Take Care of Texas.*



**G**rass clippings, leaves, and brush take up about 20 percent of landfill space in Texas. However, if you leave these yard trimmings on the lawn, you can save time and the trimmings could provide valuable nutrients to the soil, reduce the need for fertilizer, save water, cut your disposal costs, and save landfill space. The Don't Bag It® lawn-care program, created by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, is a combination of common-sense watering, mowing and fertilizing methods. The frequency of watering and mowing depends on the type of grass in your yard.

Don't Bag It® is one of six recommendations by CLEAN TEXAS 2000 to avoid landfilling and protect water supplies. Other recommended yard care techniques include mulching, composting, Xeriscaping, common-sense watering, and low-impact pest management. You can maintain an

## Don't Bag It®. Leave it a Lawn.

attractive lawn and never have to bag your grass clippings and leaves. Use trimmings where they are grown — at home.

### Grass Clippings

In the summer, grass clippings and other yard trimmings can account for up to half of what goes to landfills from households. It costs Texans an estimated \$250 million a year to collect and landfill yard trimmings.

The general rule for mowing a home lawn in the Don't Bag It® plan is to mow so that grasses remain high, around 2 to 4 inches tall. The goal is to remove not more than one-third of the leaf blade at any one time. This can mean mowing more often, but the mowing will be easier and take less time. It will also reduce water and fertilizer needs without building thatch and you will no longer need to bag your grass clippings.

Just let your grass clippings fall to the turf as you mow—the old-fashioned way. It's easy with a manually powered push mower or with a mulching attachment. Mowers designed to throw clippings into a grass catcher can be adapted to throw clippings on the ground.

Grass clippings left on the lawn all summer are equivalent to one application of fertilizer. If you want to

supplement the natural fertilizer from your yard, consider organic alternatives such as compost. If you choose a chemical fertilizer, be sure to choose a slow-release product, buy only the amount you need, and follow the label directions. Using too much chemical fertilizer can cause your grass to grow fast for short periods, require more water, and be more susceptible to disease. The chemicals also can lie unused on your lawn, and then be flushed by the next rain into our waterways and drinking water.

### Watering Frequencies

#### Some Common Texas Turf Grasses

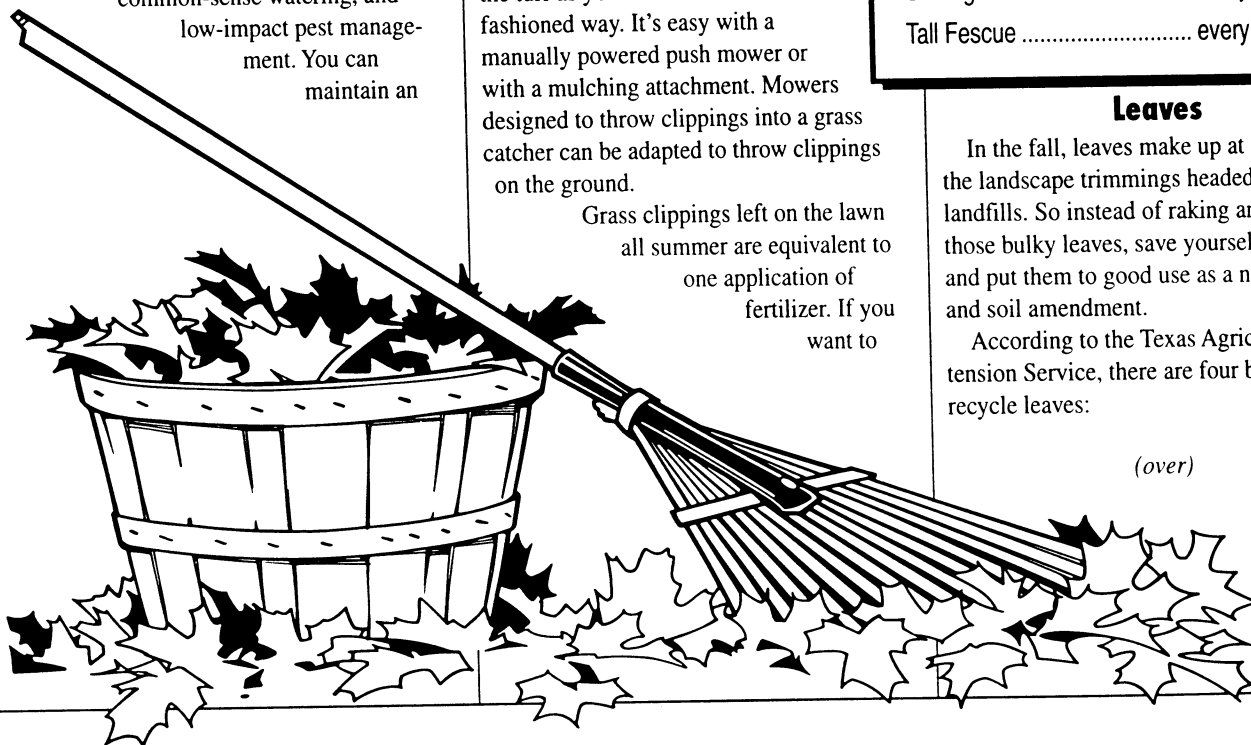
Buffalo .....	every 21 to 45 days
Common Bermuda .....	every 7 to 10 days
Zoysia .....	every 7 to 10 days
"TIF" Bermuda .....	every 5 days
St. Augustine .....	every 5 days
Tall Fescue .....	every 4 days

### Leaves

In the fall, leaves make up at least half the landscape trimmings headed to Texas landfills. So instead of raking and bagging those bulky leaves, save yourself some time and put them to good use as a natural mulch and soil amendment.

According to the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, there are four basic ways to recycle leaves:

(over)



*"Recycling Leaves" continued*

▼ **Mowing:** If there is only a light covering of leaves in your yard, just mow right over them and leave the shredded leaves on the lawn. This easy method works best with a mulching mower. Heavier leaf cover calls for the methods listed below.

▼ **Mulching:** Leaves mowed or run through a shredder decompose faster and stay in place well as mulch in gardens and around trees and shrubs. Mulching

conserves moisture, controls weeds and grasses, protects against extreme heat and cold, and prevents soil erosion. Use a lawn mower with a bag attachment to quickly gather and shred your leaf mulch.

▼ **Soil Improvement:** Prepare your garden and flower beds for spring planting by working leaves into the soil in the fall. Till 6 to 8 inches of leaves into heavy, clay soil to improve aeration and drainage. Till the same amount into light, sandy soil to improve water- and nutrient-holding capacity.

▼ **Composting:** If you have a garden, lawn or even house plants, you've got use for compost. Start with leaves and other yard trimmings to form the bottom layer of a compost pile. Top with water and soil or old compost and add more leaves, grass clippings and vegetative kitchen scraps as they become available.

---

Sources: Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission.